

RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST

NO. 1790

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 13, 1884,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”
Acts 19:2

IT may be well to notice what question the apostle did *not* put to these Ephesian disciples of John. He did not say to them, “Have ye believed?” This would have been a very important question, but it ought to be settled once for all. Our faith must either be boldly affirmed or sorrowfully denied, but it should not remain the subject of question. It is a great pity that so many Christians are always saying, “Have I believed?” and allowing that most vital point to be a matter of debate, for as long as the existence of faith within our souls is the subject of question, we must be unhappy.

Faith is the corner stone of the edifice of godliness, and if it is not well laid, and known to be well laid, there can be no sense of security to the inhabitant of the house. We not only ought to know that we believe, but to know whom we believe, and it would be well for us to advance beyond common believing to assurance, and then to full assurance—the assurance of faith, the assurance of hope, and the assurance of understanding.

Again, Paul does not put the question, “If you have believed, how came it about? By what agencies was faith created in your souls? When did you first become believers?” These are very proper questions if we view them as points of interest, but they do not touch the essence of salvation. A man may be saved, and yet know none of the details of his conversion. No doubt, there are many strong believers who could not point to any special agency as the means by which faith was begotten within them. In general, it was by the hearing of the Word of God, and by the operation of the Holy Spirit, but they do not recollect, as some do, a remarkable text, or a thrilling sermon, or a striking providence, through which they were turned from darkness to light.

Thousands in the fold of Jesus come to the good Shepherd by degrees. Many who now walk in the light received daylight, not by the leaping of the sun above the horizon in a moment, but as our days mostly begin in this country, a little light tinged the eastern sky, and then came a rosy hue, followed by a dim dawn, and afterwards came the actual rising of the sun, which comes out of the chambers of the east, and runs his course till he has created perfect day. Many are gradually brought to Christ, and yet they are truly brought to Christ. I say we may ask about the when and the how of conversion if we wish to be interested, as we have a right to be, in the stories of the godly, but we must not ask such questions as if they were of vital importance, and should stand first.

Paul does not inquire about ways, and means, and times, but he does ask—“Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” Our Revised Version reads it, “Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?” and others who are probably quite as accurate read it, “Are ye receiving the Holy Ghost now that ye have believed?” It does not matter one atom which way you read it, all the renderings come to this—“Do you see a connection between your believing and the Holy Ghost? Did you receive Him when you believed? Have you received Him since you believed? Are you daily receiving Him as you believe?” That is the subject which is now before us—the Holy Spirit in our hearts as believers. Has your faith been sealed by the impress of the Holy Ghost? This is a point of the utmost importance, and upon it I desire to speak with deep and solemn earnestness in the power of the Holy Spirit Himself.

You know, dear friends, when the Holy Spirit was given in the earliest ages He showed His presence by certain miraculous signs. Some of those who received the Holy Spirit spoke with tongues, others began to prophesy, and a third class received the gifts of healing, so that wherever they laid their hands disease fled before them. I am sure that if these powers were given now in connection with the reception of the Holy Spirit and your believing, you would all be anxious to possess them. I can hardly imagine a single Christian who would not put to himself the inquiry, "Have I received the Holy Spirit in that fashion?" You would want to be healing, or to be speaking with tongues, or to be working miracles by which you could benefit your fellow men and glorify God, would you not?

Now, be it never forgotten that those works of the Holy Spirit which are permanent must assuredly be of greater value than those which were transitory. We cannot suppose that the Holy Ghost brought forth the best wine at first, and that His operations gradually deteriorated. It is a rule of the kingdom to keep the best wine for the last, and therefore I conclude that you and I are not left to partake of the dregs, but that those works of the Holy Spirit which are at this time vouchsafed to the church of God are every way as valuable as those earlier miraculous gifts which have departed from us.

The work of the Holy Spirit, by which men are quickened from their death in sin, is not inferior to the power which made men speak with tongues. The work of the Holy Spirit, when He comforts men and makes them glad in Christ, is by no means second to the opening of the eyes of the blind. Why, sirs, men might have the gifts of the Spirit as to miracles, and yet might perish after all, but he that has the spiritual gifts of the Holy Ghost shall never perish, they are saving blessings, and where they come they lift the man out of his sinful estate, and make him to be a child of God.

I would therefore press it upon you this morning that, as you would certainly inquire whether you had the gifts of healing and miracle-working, if such gifts were now given to believers, much more should you inquire whether you have those more permanent gifts of the Spirit which are this day open to you all, by the which you shall work no physical miracle, but shall achieve spiritual wonders of the grander sort.

If we come to weigh spiritual operations, they are by no means secondary in the judgment of enlightened servants of God. Have you then received the Spirit since you believed? Beloved, are you now receiving the Spirit? Are you living under His divine influence? Are you filled with His power? Put the question personally. I am afraid some professors will have to admit that they hardly know whether there be any Holy Ghost, and others will have to confess that though they have enjoyed a little of His saving work, yet they do not know much of His ennobling and sanctifying influence.

We have none of us participated in His operations as we might have done, we have sipped where we might have drunk, we have drunk where we might have bathed, we have bathed up to the ankles where we might have found rivers to swim in. Alas, of many Christians it must be affirmed that they have been naked, and poor, and miserable, when they might in the power of the Holy Spirit have been clad in golden garments, and have been rich and increased in goods. He waits to be gracious, but we linger in indifference, like those of whom we read, "they could not enter in because of unbelief."

There are many such cases, and therefore it is not improper that I should with all vehemence press home upon you the question of the apostle, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Did ye receive Him when ye believed? Are ye receiving Him now that ye are believing in Christ Jesus?

We will, first, this morning, consider *the question*, and then we will listen to *the lessons* which it is calculated to teach.

I. I want you to consider THE QUESTION.

In some respects it is *a vital question*. I shall not be playing about the outskirts of religion now, but plunging into its very center. This question has nothing to do with the sect to which you belong, nor with the particular condition in which your mind may happen to be for the present hour, it is an inquiry which touches the heart of the man and the inmost life of his spirit. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" For, remember, the Holy Ghost is the author of all spiritual *life*. Life does not lie latent in natural men for themselves to stir up, but until the Holy Ghost visits them, they are dead in trespasses

and sins. If, when you believed, you had not a life imparted by the Holy Spirit, your believing was a dead believing, the mere counterfeit of living faith, and not the faith of God's elect.

If the Holy Ghost has not been with you since your conversion, every act of your religion has been formal, dead, and unaccepted. In vain have you tuned your formal songs, in vain have you attempted to adore, your Hosannas have languished on your tongues, and your devotion has fallen like a corpse before the altar. If the Holy Ghost is not there, life is not there, your many prayers have been mockeries, your joys have been delusions, and your griefs have been carnal. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and nothing better, let that flesh be washed and cleansed, yet all that comes of it is flesh, only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. There must, then, be a work from heaven, a work of the Holy Ghost upon the heart, or else you have not believed unto life, and you still abide in death.

As the Holy Ghost is the Author of our quickening, the Lord and Giver of life, so is He the Author of all true *instruction*. My brother, you have professed to be a believer, but you know nothing at all unless the Holy Spirit has taught you. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." To be taught of the minister is nothing, but to be taught of the Lord is everything. It is only the Spirit of God who can engrave the truth upon the fleshy tablets of the heart. We speak to the ear, but only He can speak to the inmost soul. He that professes to be a believer, while he has never received the truth in the power of it, as sent home by the Spirit of light and fire, has need to begin again, and learn the first rudiments of the faith.

He has learned nothing aright who has not been under the direct tuition of the Holy Ghost. The knowledge of the letter only puffs up those who rest in it, and eventually the letter kills, but the inward whisper, the secret admonition, the silent operation of the Spirit of God which falls as the dew from heaven upon the heart—this is quite another thing. He that has it not is blind and ignorant, though he be a D. D., revered as a rabbi in Israel. Though he be a preacher to thousands, he is still in the dark unless the Spirit of God has shone in upon his soul. See, then, how vital this question is. Both for life and for light we must have the Holy Ghost, or else we are dead and in the dark.

Furthermore, if we have believed in Christ aright, the Holy Ghost has come upon us to *transform* us altogether. By divine grace we are not now what we used to be, we have new thoughts, new wishes, new aspirations, new sorrows, new joys, and these are worked in us by the Spirit. A man's conversion is nothing; his believing is nothing, his profession is nothing unless he is made to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. But how can we be made new by any other power than the Holy Spirit? Only He that creates can new-create. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

We cannot hate evil and love right of ourselves, for the whole bent and bias of our spirit since the fall are toward evil, only evil, and that continually. Neither can we renew ourselves. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Can an unclean thing bring forth itself clean out of uncleanness? Between the ribs of death there cannot be spontaneously formed the seeds of life. The Holy Spirit must transform us by the renewing of our minds, we must be begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, or else we are still in the flesh, and cannot please God. If our faith has not brought with it the Holy Spirit, if indeed, it is not the fruit of the Spirit, and we are not changed in nature and in life, then our faith is presumption, and our profession is a lie.

Furthermore, it is absolutely essential to all true religion that you and I should be *sanctified*. A faith which works not for purification will work for putrefaction. Unless our faith makes us pine after holiness, and pant after conformity to God, it is no better than the faith of devils, and perhaps it is not even as good as that. How can any man become holy except by the Spirit of Holiness? A holy man is the workmanship of the Holy Spirit. Through faith we are sanctified by the operation of the Holy Ghost, so that we are delivered from the dominion of sin, and set free to follow after that which is good and pure and right in the sight of God. Faith which does not bring holiness with it is a dead faith which will never bring us into communion with the living God. Oh, the absolute necessity that the Holy Ghost should rest upon us when we believe in Christ!

Beside that, remember, dear friends, there is one mark of God's people which if it be lacking is fatal, and that is *prayer*. "Behold, he prayeth," is a true sign of the new birth, but can a man pray without the assistance of the Holy Spirit? Let him try to do so, and if he be honest and sincere he will soon find the value of that text, "Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Pray without the Spirit of God? Oh, sir, it will be a mechanical performance, the statue of prayer, but not the living, prevailing supplication of an heir of heaven. You may go to your chamber, and kneel down at that particular chair, where you have so often enjoyed communion with God, but unless you invoke the Spirit of God the posture shall be a weariness, the exercise shall be heartless, and the result shall be worthless. What is the incense without the burning coals? What is the mercy seat without the Shekinah light? Prayer without the Spirit is as a bird without wings, or an arrow without a bow. As well hope to see a dead man sit up in his coffin, and plead a case in a court of law, as hope to see a man prevail in prayer who is a stranger to the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of grace and of supplications. You will leave your prayer closet unrefreshed if you have been in it without the Spirit. Even the desire to pray is not with us unless the Holy Ghost has wrought it in the soul, no true word of supplication can arise from the heart unless the Spirit of God shall prompt it.

Dear, dear friends, you do see, do you not, how on all these points contact with the Spirit of God becomes essential to our present spiritual life and to our eternal salvation? Look you to it, look you to it at once. If all you have is what you have made yourself, you and your works must perish, if all your prayers have risen from no greater depth than your own heart, and if they are the fruit of no better spirit than your own, they will never reach to the ear of God, nor bring you blessings from the throne.

If there is not something supernatural about your religion, it will be a millstone about your neck to sink you into hell. What comes from the dunghill, and is of the dunghill, will rot on the dunghill. That which comes from a man's heart, apart from the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, will rise no higher than his own depraved nature, and leave Him unblessed, but that which comes from above will elevate him to its own element, and cause him to dwell with Christ at the right hand of God.

But now, while this is a vital question, I beg to say further that *where it is not vital it is nevertheless greatly important*. I do not think we ought always to be asking the question, "Is this essential?" meaning thereby, "Is it essential to our salvation?" Those are miserable souls who would be stingy in obedience and love, so that they would labor and love no more than is absolutely necessary to get to heaven. They would be saved in the cheapest possible way, and they would be content to crawl over the threshold of glory, but not to go too far in. They want as much grace as may be necessary to float them over the bar at the harbor's mouth, but they do not desire an abundant entrance.

O you miserly professors, stinting yourselves in the matter of the grace of God, I have little enough to say to you, but I turn to the children of God, and joyfully remind them that there is in the Holy Ghost not only what they absolutely need to save them, but much more. Here is not only bread, but wine on the lees well refined. In the Holy Ghost there is comfort to gladden you, grace to strengthen you, holiness to ennoble you, and love to purify you.

For, first, the Spirit of God is the *Comforter*, and how important it is that you should be comforted! Why do you hang your heads? Why do you go mourning as if you were in the night, and the dews were thick upon your eyelids? You are the children of the morning, and the children of the day, rejoice in the Lord, and walk in the light as He is in the light. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" You whose brows are furrowed with care, whose hearts are distracted with anxiety, receive the Spirit of consolation and be glad in the Lord, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

In the Holy Ghost there is also a spirit of *enlightening*. Do you not read the Word of God understanding very little of it? Do you not hear it as though you heard not? Why is this? Should you not seek more of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that He may lead you into all truth? How much happier you would be, and how much more useful, if you knew more of the things of God! The Holy Spirit can take of the things of Christ, and can show them to you. Now you only see men as trees walking, but there is

no need to be content with such dim vision, for the Comforter can anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see, He can open your eyes that you may behold wondrous things out of His law. Why not seek to have the enlightening Spirit of God resting on you, to teach you in His Word and way?

The Spirit of God is, also, the Spirit of *liberty*, but some of God's children do not seem to have attained their freedom as yet. They have one fetter remaining on their foot, and though they try to enter into the broad fields of heavenly enjoyment, they cannot escape from their prison. Of such we may well ask—have you received the Spirit since you believed? If so, wherefore are you the slaves of custom, the bondaged serfs of fashion? Wherefore do you ask leave of your fellow men to breathe, or think? Why are you so cowardly that you dare not follow conscience, or speak of the things of God?

The fear of man brings a snare to many, and that snare is also a chain to their feet. It ought not so to be. Rather they should feel that, since the Son has made them free, they are free indeed. The Holy Spirit is a free Spirit, and makes men free, where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. Glory be to You, O God, "I am thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds." Many weak children of God have received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but they have not yet received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, "Abba, Father."

Oh, the glory of the Spirit of God when He makes us feel that we are no more servants, but sons; not under the law, but under grace; not under wrath, but under love; not doomed to death, but endowed with life! He has brought us forth from the prison house, and broken all our bonds asunder. He has set our feet in a large room, and made us to walk at liberty, because we keep His statutes. Ours is the freedom of no small city, for our citizenship is in heaven, and the Spirit of God enables us to enjoy the burgess-ship of the New Jerusalem. It is important that we should know what this heavenly freedom means.

Some of God's people need to feel the Spirit of God as a power *moving and impelling them to holy service*. Do you never hear behind you a voice saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it"? Have you never known holy impulses bidding you do this and that—impulses which did not come from human nature, for they impelled you to something which you would naturally have avoided? And do you never follow after things unseen, driven onward as by a powerful wind, not to be resisted? Have you not been made willing, in the day of God's power, to do the divine bidding? I would we had more of it, for then we should be more ready for service, and should do greater things than these.

That same Spirit who moves the saints to work, also *empowers* them to achieve the purpose which is put into their souls. By His aid you shall go forth in your feebleness, and put to flight the armies of the aliens, you shall be in God's hands as a sharp threshing instrument having teeth, and shall thresh mountains, and beat them small, yea, fan them, and the wind shall carry them away. Does any man know what the Spirit of God can make of him? I believe the greatest, ablest, most faithful, most holy man of God might have been greater, and abler, and more faithful, and more holy, if he had put himself more completely at the Spirit's disposal. Wherever God has done great things by a man He has had power to do more had the man been fit for it. We are straitened in ourselves, not in God.

O brothers, the church is weak today because the Holy Spirit is not upon her members as we could desire Him to be. You and I are tottering along like feeble babes, whereas, had we more of the Spirit, we might walk without fainting, run without weariness, and even mount up with wings as eagles. Oh, for more of the anointing of the Holy Ghost whom Christ is prepared to give immeasurably unto us if we will but receive Him! "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Is there not much divine power which has not as yet been manifested in you?

"Oh," says one, "I feel so dull today!" Do you? Is not the Holy Spirit the power to refresh you, and to rekindle in your soul the dying flame of spiritual fervor? Oh, if you did but receive His power today, you would not mind the heaviness of the atmosphere, nor any other deadening surroundings, for the Spirit would triumph over the flesh. Do you know the power of the Spirit? Did He never make you like the chariots of Amminadib? Did He never carry you away with His supreme power? Did you never run like Elijah before Ahab's chariot, and feel that it was a little thing to do? Can you not say, "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength! By my God have I leaped over a wall, and broken thorough a troop: I

can do all things through Christ that strengthens me”? These are the expressions of souls familiar with the Holy Ghost: when He inspires them, they are divinely strong, even to omnipotence. Brethren, we must have the Holy Spirit. Are you receiving of His forces? Are you receiving His fullness even now?

Now I come to notice that *this question is assuredly answerable*. “Have you received the Holy Ghost?” The notion has sprung up that you cannot tell whether you have the Holy Spirit or not, but you can. Give a man an electric shock, and I warrant you he will know it, but if he has the Holy Ghost he will know it much more. You may sometimes raise the question, “Did I ever feel the Holy Ghost in years gone by?” but you cannot ask the question, “Do I feel it now?” for if you feel it now you have the witness in yourself that the Lord is at work with you. You need not ask a question about present experience. If you do not feel the Holy Ghost at work distinctly and perceptibly even now, then lift your heart to God for it, and pray that you may now receive Him in all His fullness.

“Oh,” says one, “I thought we must always say, ‘I hope so, I trust so.’” I know that jargon, but men do not say “I hope I have an estate,” or “I trust I have twenty shillings in the pound,” or “I think I have a wife and children.” Some of us are quite clear about these matters, one way or the other. We should not live on guess-work as to daily life, much less as to eternal things. O souls, live daily on what God gives you, and you cannot doubt; live near to Christ, and you cannot doubt whether you love Him; live in the Holy Spirit, give yourselves up fully to His divine anointings and bedewings, and you will not have to say, “I hardly know whether there be any Holy Ghost,” for He dwells with you, and shall be in you.

Permit me to say here that there are many professors to whom *this question is inevitable*. I will pick out certain of them. There is the brother with the long dreary face, the Knight of the Rueful Countenance. You know him, and you pity him. His favorite hymn is—

*“’Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought.”*

Is there anything dreary? He delights in it as much as he can delight in anything. He is sure of nothing but the horrible, everything that is pleasant he is afraid of. His life is one protracted groan. Come along, brother, and shake hands as cheerfully as you can. Please tell me, have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? How he hesitates! Poor soul, he is perplexed. He is not well acquainted with the Comforter. Here is a hymn for him, let us sing it to a gladsome tune—

*“Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?
Great Comforter, descend and bring
Some tokens of Thy grace.*

*Do Thou not dwell in all the saints
And seal the heirs of heaven?
When wilt Thou banish my complaints,
And show my sins forgiven?”*

Surely, if we have the earnest of the Spirit, the first fruits of heaven, we ought to rejoice in the Lord always. Brother, you look comfortless, how is this when the Comforter has come to you?

Another brother is a member of the church, and a very unpleasant neighbor, for he picks holes in everybody and everything, he is a born grumbler, and since he has been new born he has not given up the habit. When he goes home this morning, after dinner he will spend the afternoon in his growlery, complaining of the heat, and perhaps of my sermon. Oh, my dear brother, you who are so uneasy and unhappy, and so worrying and annoying to everybody, did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed? Are you receiving the Holy Ghost still?

I have sometimes thought that certain unfriendly friends must have been baptized in vinegar instead of water, from the sharp acid of their temperament. Surely the Spirit of God is a dove, full of peace, and love, and kindness, and not a bird of prey. Let me put my hand on that brother's shoulder, if he will allow such a rudeness, and say, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?"

Here comes another who flies out into great tempers, and grows fiercely angry. A little thing puts him out, he finds fault readily enough, and becomes excited in no time. He says that he is very sorry for it afterwards, but this does not remove the wounds which he has inflicted. If you cut a person's head off, it is of small use to apologize to him afterwards. Many a man boils over with passion and scalds his friend, and then in cooler moments expresses his regret. All very fine, but fine words cure no blisters.

I would suggest to you the next time you are in a great temper that you ask yourself this question, "Have I received the Holy Ghost since I believed? Is He not the spirit of peace and gentleness?" I fancy anybody putting that question to you when you are in an irritated state of mind, you would reply, "Pray do not mention such a subject here, for I am not acting as I ought to do." Then do act as you ought to do, and ask for the Spirit of God to help you to be quiet, forgiving, humble, and meek.

Here is a brother who cannot be happy unless he indulges in worldly frivolities and useless amusements. When he gets into a grand frolic with worldly people, he finds himself at home, but the joys of godliness he despises. My friend, the next time you are coming home from a party, I should like to meet you in the street and inquire, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" You would think me almost blaspheming. Alas! the blasphemy is in your heart. You would feel awkward, would you not? Do not do things which make you feel awkward, keep out of those scenes which are unfit for a child of God. Do not play with the devil's children.

Many people around this place are sore put to it to keep their children from bad company. There is no playground for their children but the streets, and it seems hard when they say that their children shall not associate with rude children in the road, yet they must do it. Our Lord does not love that His dear children should sport with heirs of wrath, or make them their intimates. Such evil communications will bring you misery sooner or later. You cannot expect the Holy Spirit to continue with you if you are joined with the adversaries of the Lord.

But there are certain persons who live solely to hoard and scrape and get money, that they may grow rich and grind everybody else to pieces in the process. I would like when the avaricious man is totaling up his gains to put to him the question, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" He would answer, "Don't, don't, it is terribly out of place to mention so serious a matter." It is out of place no doubt, for the man himself is out of place, but ought a believer to be in a position in which it shall be out of place for a friend to speak to him about his eternal interests?

I know *some to whom the question is needless*. You never did put it to them, and you never will. You meet them in the morning, soaring aloft, like the lark, in the praises of God. See them in trouble, they are patient and resigned to their heavenly Father's will. Mark how they spend their lives in hallowed service, seeking always to win sinners to Christ, their common talk is sweet with the honey of the Holy Land, you cannot be with them ten minutes without discovering that they have leaned on Jesus' bosom. There is an aroma about them which tells you that they dwell in the garden of the Lord. When they tell you their experience it is e'en as if an angel shook his wings. You do not ask them if they have received the Holy Ghost, but you stand still and admire the work of the Spirit of God in them.

Now, beloved, be such yourselves. If our church is to be strong, and if it is to make a lasting impression upon its age by bearing a telling testimony to the truth, we must not only have the Spirit of God in His essential operations, but in His soul-enriching, heart-delighting, life-sanctifying power. Thus will He turn earth into heaven, and make us poor earth-born creatures fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

So much upon the question, I cannot send it home, I can only pray that God the Holy Spirit, whom I desire to honor, may apply these thoughts with power to your souls.

II. One or two LESSONS can be gathered upon the very surface of this question. “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”

Then the first lesson is, *we are not to look for salvation to one single act of faith in the past*, but to Jesus, in whom we continue to believe. I have read, very much to my grief, an assertion that, whatever we may be today, we are safe, if years ago we exercised a single act of faith. There may be truth in the statement, but it is so badly stated, and so wretchedly distorted, that it looks like a lie, that which saves is a faith which does not spend itself in a single act, but continues to work and operate throughout the whole of life. It is not a question for me today, “Did I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in the year 1850, on a certain morning in the month of January?” Oh, no, the question is, “Do I believe in the Lord Jesus at this hour?” For if my faith is “faith of the operation of God,” it has continued to this hour, and will continue to the end.

All my troubles, all my temptations, all my sins have not killed my faith, but for every day, as the day has come, I have continued to receive the Holy Spirit’s gracious aid since I believed, and was brought into newness of life. “The just shall live by faith.” It is a principle within, springing up unto everlasting life, it is a living well which never ceases to flow. It is not something I do in one five minutes, and then have done with it, it is a holy act which I began to do at a certain time, but which I shall never leave off doing till there remains nothing more to be believed.

They say we do not believe in heaven, but this is surely an error occasioned by want of thought. Heaven is a fit sphere for faith, not faith for what we shall there see, but for things promised and not yet fulfilled. If I were to go to heaven today, I should believe in my stopping there, I should believe in the Lord’s continuing to love me, I should believe in all the prophecies yet unfulfilled, in the ingathering of the redeemed, and the perfecting of the church, and the second Advent of the Lord. I should look for the resurrection, the new heavens and the new earth, the millennial glory, the binding of Satan, and the eternal glory of the Triune God. Faith may be altogether lost in sight so far as things realized are concerned, but it will be grandly exercised upon blessings yet to come. We must live by faith, it is not only our starting point, but the road along which we are to travel.

The next lesson of the text is that *we must continue to live by receiving*. We received Christ Jesus the Lord at the first, and now we receive the Holy Ghost. These disciples were questioned about their receiving rather than their expending, for at bottom everything depends upon what we receive. Nothing can come out of us if it does not first go into us. We are always charity children. It is our blessed lot to live upon the alms of divine bounty. The question may still be asked of us, “What hast thou which thou hast not received?” We are always filled out of the fullness of the Lord, for we are not fountains but reservoirs, not creators but receivers. What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards us? We can only keep on receiving—take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.

Again, let us learn that *we may not despise the very lowest form of spiritual life*, nay, not even those who have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. Paul, when he met these half-instructed disciples, did not say, “You see the door. Be off, you have nothing to do with me, for you are so desperately ignorant.” On the contrary, he sat down and taught them more, and then baptized them. God has some children who are mere babes and sucklings, and it is a fact for their comfort that He does not judge of their being His children by measuring their height. Babes in grace are as much His children as those who have reached perfect manhood.

Weaklings are dear to God, let them be dear to us. When you are considering some poor child of God who has no education, and cannot read the Bible, do not judge him by his knowledge. The question is not whether he knows “A” from “B,” for if he knows “J” from “I” he knows enough, that is to say, if he knows Jesus from himself he has grasped the essential point. If He trusts Christ and not himself he knows enough to take him to heaven, and enough for you to take him into your heart.

Another lesson is that *the Holy Spirit always keeps sweet company with Jesus Christ*. As long as these good people only knew John the Baptist, they might know water baptism, but they could not know the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It was only when they came to know Jesus that then the Spirit of God

came upon them, and they began to work those mighty things which are the fruits of the Spirit. Learn, then, to keep close to Christ both in your lives and in your teachings. The Spirit of God will not set His seal to what I say or what you say, but He will confirm the testimony of Jesus. The things of God concerning Christ Jesus our Lord shall never be without the attesting power of the Holy Ghost.

Once more, *the Holy Ghost can yet be more fully possessed by all believers*. If there should be a brother or sister here who has a notion that he cannot have any more grace, I am afraid he is especially in need of it. The perfect brother I must leave to the angels, he is above my reach, for I am sent to fallible men. I conceive that when a man is so good in his own esteem that he cannot be better, he is even then no better than he should be, and is either cracked in his head or his honesty.

However, I leave him to his own master, but as for you and for me, let us be certain that if we have been taught of the Spirit, there is more light yet for the Spirit to give us; if we have been quickened of the Spirit, there is more life yet for the Spirit to impart to us; if we have been comforted, there are greater consolations yet which the Spirit of God can apply to our hearts; if we have been made strong, we can be stronger yet to do yet greater exploits; if we have had communion with Christ, we can have closer communion yet, and enter more thoroughly into the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High.

If it can be, then why should it not be? Does not every man or woman here that is a Christian say, “I mean to realize all the possibilities of true religion”? A little religion is a miserable thing. He that has just enough to save him at last, may not have enough to comfort him for the present. He that has much grace, and is filled with the Spirit of God, shall have two heavens, a heaven here and a heaven hereafter. I desire to make that true in my own case. I would find two heavens in Jesus, are there not many more? He who has the Spirit richly shall have the joy of the Lord here to be his strength, and the joy of the Lord hereafter to be his reward.

Come, let us ask for all that God is willing to give. Does He not say, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it”? Come, you little ones, why remain little? Our prayer for you is, that you may be as David, and David as the angel of the Lord. Come. You are living on crumbs, why not eat abundantly of the bread of heaven? Do not be content with pence, for a king’s ransom is at your disposal. Poor brother, rise out of your poverty. Sister, bowed down by reason of the little of the Spirit of God you have received, believe for more, and pray upon a larger scale. May the Lord enlarge all our hearts, and fill them, and then enlarge them again, and fill them again, so that from day to day we may receive the Holy Ghost, till at the last Jesus shall receive us into His glory.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 18:24-28, 19:1-20

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—57, 448, 464

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.